

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A process for the manufacture of flexographic printing plates, said process comprising:
 - a. selectively exposing certain areas of a printing plate element to actinic radiation, wherein the printing plate element comprises:
 1. a metallic substrate; and
 2. a photopolymer layer, comprising one or more binder(s), monomer(s) and photoinitiator(s), upon said metallic substrate wherein the thickness of said photopolymer layer is not more than about 22 mils, the durometer of the photopolymer layer, when cured, is at least 55 Shore A and wherein the photopolymer layer comprises not more than about 82% by weight binder(s); such that selected portions of the photopolymer layer are cured;
 - b. heating the printing plate element to at least 70° C, thereby selectively softening or melting portions of the photopolymer layer; and
 - c. contacting the heated printing plate element with a material which will absorb or otherwise remove the softened or melted portions of the photopolymer layer.
2. A process according to claim 1 wherein the binder of the photopolymer layer comprises at least one material selected from the group consisting of styrene - isoprene - styrene block co - polymers, and styrene - butadiene - - styrene block co - polymers.,

3. A process according to claim 1 wherein the thickness of the metallic substrate is from 3 to 14 mils.
4. A process according to claim 1, wherein the photopolymer has a melt flow index of at least 0.5 gr/10 minutes at 140° C.
5. A process according to claim 1 wherein the thickness of the metallic substrate is between 5 and 11 mils.